

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 RSR-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-10 CPR-02 OMB-01

/072 W

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R 091142Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 395

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFORN PK, US

SUBJ: BHUTTO VISIT: EMBASSY PRESS RELEASE ON JULY

POSTPONEMENT

1. IN RECENT DAYS THERE HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD COMMENT IN PAKISTAN TO EFFECT THAT POSTPONEMENT OF PRESIDENT BHUTTO'S JULY VISIT TO US WAS NOT RESULT OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S ILLNESS, BUT RATHER OF CALCULATED US DISPLAY OF DISSATISFACTION WITH BHUTTO LEADERSHIP. EGOCENTRIC AND CONSPIRATORIAL AS SUCH TALK MAY BE, MATTER WAS EVEN RAISED ON FLOOR OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AUGUST 6 BY OPPOSITION MEMBERS. ONE INSINUATED THAT PRESIDENT NIXON'S ILLNESS WAS DIPLOMATIC AND OTHER OPPOSITION MEMBERS EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT PRESIDENT BHUTTO HAS NO STANDING INVITATION TO VISIT UNITED STATES IN SEPTEMBER. EMBASSY DECIDED THAT SOME STEP WAS DESIRABLE ON OUR PART TO ATTEMPT SCOTCH SUCH TALK BY PERSONS SEEKING TO EMBARRASS PRESIDENT BHUTTO OR ELSE SIMPLY UNINFORMED. ACCORDINGLY, CHARGE DISCUSSED PROPOSAL TO ISSUE BRIEF PRESS RELEASE AUGUST 8 WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI. SHAHI AFTER CHECKING WITH PRESIDENT BHUTTO SAID BHUTTO WOULD BE PLEASED IF EMBASSY

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ISSUED SUCH RELEASE. PRESS RELEASE, WHICH APPEARS

IN SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPH, WAS REPRODUCED BY ALMOST ALL
PRINCIPAL VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS AUGUST 9. WE HOPE
IT WILL END SPECULATION ABOUT CIRCUMSTANCES
OF POSTPONED VISIT.

2. BEGIN TEST: THE AMERICAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. IN
PAKISTAN, MR. SIDNEY SOBER, SAID TODAY HE HAD BEEN BAFFLED
BY CERTAIN COMMENTS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES IN PAKISTAN
REGARDING THE POSTPONEMENT OF PRESIDENT ZULFIKAR ALI
BHUTTO'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO
BEGIN ON JULY 17, THE VISIT WAS POSTPONED BY THE ILLNESS
OF PRESIDENT NIXON WHICH CAUSED HIS HOSPITALIZATION ON
JULY 12. MR. NIXON REMAINED UNDER MEDICAL CARE IN THE
HOSPITAL FOR ALMOST A WEEK. MR. SOBER, WHO HAD BEEN
ASKED TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON FOR PRESIDENT BHUTTO'S
VISIT, ARRIVED THERE ON JULY 13 ONLY TO BE INFORMED
OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S HOSPITALIZATION AND THE POST-
PONEMENT OF THE VISIT. MR. SOBER SAID THERE WAS
ABSOLUTELY NO REASON OTHER THAN PRESIDENT NIXON'S
ILLNESS AND HOSPITALIZATION WHICH CAUSED THE POSTPONE-
MENT OF PRESIDENT BHUTTO'S VISIT IN JULY. HE SAID
HE COULD ATTEST TO THE DEEP REGRET IN WASHINGTON OVER
THE NEED TO POSTPONE THE VISIT. MR. SOBER ALSO POINTED
TO THE VERY RAPID RESCHEDULING OF THE VISIT, WHICH IS
NOW TO TAKE PLACE IN SEPTEMBER. THE UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, IS LOOKING FORWARD EAGERLY TO THE
VISIT OF PRESIDENT BHUTTO, FOR WHOM THERE IS GREAT STOCK
OF GOOD WILL AND ADMIRATION AS THE LEADER OF A COUNTRY
WITH WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAS LONG HAD FRIENDLY
REALTIONS. END TEXT.
SOBER

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